

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## \*\*\* Consumer Advisory \*\*\*

### **Terry Goddard Warns Consumers About Fake Sweepstakes/Lottery Letters**

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Oct. 20, 2005) Attorney General Terry Goddard is warning Arizona consumers about fake sweepstakes/lottery letters circulating in Arizona. A Cottonwood resident received a letter from a company called "Trust Group Services" notifying her she was a winner of the DE-Lotto Australians Sweepstakes.

The letter gives a claim number and includes a check which they say has been deducted from the winnings and is for payment of applicable government taxes. The letter explains that the taxes and processing fees cannot be paid directly from lotto winnings, and cautions the consumer not to cash the check until she contacts the lotto company at a phone number given in the letter for instructions.

"And that is when the scam happens," Goddard said. "Typically the victim is told over the phone to deposit the enclosed check and on the same day wire the money or send a personal check to the lottery company to cover the fees and taxes. The victim is told these fees must be paid in order to collect their winnings."

In a similar lottery scheme, a Glendale resident received a letter from a company called "Telesez International Lotto" saying he was a sweepstakes winner. Accompanying the letter was a check for \$2,800 which, according to the letter, was a portion of his winnings to be used for a processing fee. The letter instructed the consumer to contact a company representative with any questions about the processing fees.

"The sweepstakes scam has been one of the more wide spread frauds," Goddard said. "This is a new twist on an old trick. Consumers need to remember that in order to win a lottery, you first have to buy a ticket."

Goddard offered the following tips to protect consumers from falling victim to this scam:

- Throw away "junk mail" solicitations and hang up on persistent callers.
- Never send money in response to a mail solicitation to "claim your prize."
- Never wire money in response to a telephone call informing you that you have won a lottery prize.
- If the calls become threatening, hang up the telephone and call local law enforcement.
- If you have already lost money in a scam, report it to the proper authorities. Once you have fallen victim, it is likely that you will be targeted for future scams.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, please contact the Attorney General's Office in Phoenix at 602.542.5763; in Tucson at 520.628.6504; or outside the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas at 1.800.352.8431. Consumers can also file complaints online by visiting the Attorney General's Web site at [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov).

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